Coalition - creation - church

Coalition – Creation – Church
In Pursuit of a Political Ecclesiology[1]

Abstract: *Taking the recent UN Report about extreme poverty in the UK as a point of departure, this article analyses and assesses William Cavanaugh's political ecclesiology. Drawing on the interpretation of Martin Luther's concept of creation by Scandinavian Creation Theology, I argue that creation destabilises the distinction Cavanaugh draws between what he considers to be church and what he considers not to be church. I account for creation as a web of vulnerability in which all creatures are vulnerable to both creature and creator. In contrast to Cavanaugh's strong and stable church, I advocate for what I call "coalitional church": a church that can enter into coalitions with Christians and non-Christians in order to call for conditions under which vulnerable life is liveable. The public and political task of churches is not necessarily to fight the state, but to hold the state accountable to its citizens, whether they are Christian or non-Christian.*

Keywords: *Church, State, Scandinavian Creation Theology, Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, William Cavanaugh, Martin Luther, Nikolaj F. S. Grundtvig, Political Theology*

"Poverty is a political choice", the UN Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty underscores in a recent report about the UK.[2]

> Austerity could easily have spared the poor, if the political will had existed to do so. Resources were available to the Treasury … that could have transformed the situation of millions of people living in poverty, but the political choice was made to fund tax cuts for the wealthy instead.[3]

According to the UN Rapporteur, the government of the UK is engaged in "radical social re-engineering".[4] Although he offers neither a definition nor a description of these terms, his concern is clear: at the core of the UK's poverty policies is a commitment to consciously change the social structure of the country. Poverty is produced rather than prevented. Under these conditions, churches are called to think through their political theologies. Although the establishment of the Church of England prohibits any strict separation of the church from the state, churches in the UK are called to characterise their position and their politics vis-à-vis the

[1] This article is a revised version of a lecture that I delivered at the conference on "Church as Human Space: Scandinavian Creation Theology for a Post-Secular Age" at Stockholm, 21 to 22 March 2019. I am grateful to Bengt Kristensson Uggla and Michael Schelde for their invitation. I would like to thank the two respondents to my lecture, Jayne Svenungsson and Trygve Wyller, for their comments and criticisms. I am also grateful to the two anonymous peer-reviewers of this article. All of them have helped to refine the argument of this article.
[2] Alston, "Statement on Visit to the United Kingdom", 22. The report is made available by the United Nations Human Rights Office at https://www.ohchr.org/documents/issues/poverty/eom_gb_16nov2018.pdf (accessed 19 May 2019).
[3] Ibid., 22-23.
[4] Ibid., 2.

state. Should they decide to counter the state? Should they decide to confirm the state? And how could or should they reach a decision?

In what follows, I analyse and assess William Cavanaugh's account of the significance of the church for politics. The church is at the centre of Cavanaugh's immensely influential political theology. I argue that the concept of creation destabilises the distinction Cavanaugh draws between what he considers to be church and what he considers not to be church. My argument draws on the interpretation of Martin Luther's concept of creation by Scandinavian Creation Theology.[5] This interpretation is important and instructive because it counters "the static idea of created orders" without ignoring the significance of creation for politics.[6] Elisabeth Gerle explains that Scandinavian Creation Theology envisions "shared life" as a core concern for politics.[7] I account for the vision of shard life by approaching creation as a web of vulnerability in which all creatures are vulnerable to both creature and creator. In contrast to Cavanaugh's strong and stable church, I advocate for what I call "coalitional church": a church that can enter into coalitions with Christians and non-Christians in order to construct, cultivate, and call for conditions under which vulnerable life is liveable. The task of churches is not necessarily to fight the state, but to hold the state accountable to its citizens, regardless of whether they are Christian or non-Christian.

The Politics of Church

In *Migrations of the Holy*, Cavanaugh describes the significance of political theology for the post-secular society by dismissing the sociological diagnosis of secularization and the sociological diagnosis of sacralization. Instead, his account of the post-secular society advocates for "migration" as a central category.[8] In the aftermath of the European Enlightenment, the holy that was attached to Christianity migrated from what is church to what is not church—"the nation-state".[9] Against the nation-state, Cavanaugh turns to:

[5] For a concise but comprehensive introduction to Scandinavian Creation Theology, see Gregersen, Kristensson Uggla, and Wyller, "Reconfiguring Reformation Theology", in Gregersen, Kristensson Uggla, and Wyller (eds), *Reformation Theology for a Post-Secular Age*, 11-34.
[6] Gerle, "Becoming Fully Human", Gerle and Schelde (eds), *American Perspectives*, 50-63 at 53.
[7] Gerle, *Passionate Embrace*, 295-299. See also, with reference to Scandinavian Creation Theology, Keller, *Political Theology of the Earth*.
[8] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 1-6.
[9] Ibid., 1. See also his doctoral dissertation, supervised by Stanley Hauerwas, Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, where Cavanaugh conceptualises his critique of the state by concentrating on Chile under Augusto Pinochet.

> Augustine, who speaks not of one city but two. For Augustine, there is no division of goods: both cities use the same finite goods, but use them for different ends. The two cities compete for the same goods; both are practices of binding, alternate practices of *religio.* … The two cities are not two institutions but two performances, two practices.[10]

Cavanaugh theorises a clash between two cities—the one performative practice constituting the church and the other performative practice constituting the non-church—as a clash between constructions of identity. He pits the liturgies of what is church and the liturgies of what is non-church against each other, proposing that they lead to competing and conflicting formations of individual and social identity.[11] The world stands against the church as much as the church stands against the world.[12]

In the clash of identity constructions characteristic of the post-secular society, the church needs to claim or re-claim its "political presence" in order to inform constructions of identity.[13] According to Cavanaugh, the politics of the church can "complexify" public and political space so as "to create forms of local and translocal community" that can resist the simple space of the nation-state where the sovereign allocates rights and the subject accepts responsibilities.[14] Cavanaugh's politics of the church is neither against the separation of the church from the state nor against the separation of the state from the church, but against taking theology out of politics and politics out of theology.[15] He calls for a "Christian micropolitics", infused by the performative practice of the Eucharist, that inspires "grass-roots groups of Christians".[16]

The Eucharist is crucial for such micropolitics as it allows for a configuration of different and diverse communities as the body of Christ.[17] According to Cavanaugh, "the body of Christ in the Eucharist is multi-dimensional".[18] The Eucharist includes the giver, the gift,

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[10] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 49. Cavanaugh works in the wake of a variety of theologians who take Augustine as a point of departure for their concepts of church. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, has probably been the most programmatic. For the programme see Milbank, "'Postmodern Critical Augustinianism'", 225-237.
[11] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 83-84.
[12] Cavanaugh concentrates on how the church counters the state, but the thrust of his theology is so comprehensive that there is a terminological slippage from state to world and world to state. See Ibid., 1-7. One reason for this slippage is that Cavanaugh argues that the state absorbs society so that distinctions between the two cannot be accepted. See Cavanaugh, *Migrations,* 18-33.
[13] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 4.
[14] Ibid., 5. Cavanaugh's concept of "complex space" is inspired by the concluding chapter, "On Complex Space", in Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 268-292.
[15] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 4.
[16] Ibid., 5.
[17] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 7.
[18] Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 271.

and the giving of Jesus Christ by incorporating Christians into the body of Christ.[19] Christians practise and perform the body of Christ that connects Christians to Christians, on the one hand, and Christians to Christ, on the other. The Eucharist thus redefines both identity and alterity.[20] Through the Eucharist, each and every body can be perceived and produced as a member of the body of Christ, either presently or potentially.[21] "In this eschatological view we must regard all human beings, Christians and non-Christians alike, as at least potential members of the body of Christ".[22] Once Christians see all human beings "as fellow members of the mystical body of Christ", they relate to them like they relate to Christians and to Christ.[23] The Body of Christ, then, can make a difference in the public square and the political sphere because "in the Eucharist the foundational distinction between mine and thine is radically effaced … by participation in Christ's body".[24] The Eucharist—conceived and celebrated in accordance with Cavanaugh's account—might indeed be a promising point of departure to tackle the production of poverty by the government of the UK through a Christian micropolitics. But Cavanaugh is more ambitious. The church, he argues, comes into consideration as a fully-fledged critique and contrast to the state.

Cavanaugh's critique of the nation-state is conceptualised historically as well as sociologically and philosophically. Historically, Cavanaugh argues that the category of the state "that is independent of both ruler and ruled" was invented in the sixteenth century.[25] The wars of religion that waged across Europe after the Reformation are not pacified but provoked by the construction of the neutral state.[26] According to Cavanaugh, the frontlines along which these wars were fought were *not* confessional: Catholics battled Catholics as much as Protestants battled Protestants, so taking competing confessions as the cause of these wars is a "myth".[27] What Cavanaugh calls "the creation myth for modernity" is dangerous because it camouflages the violence at the core of the construction of the state.[28] For Cavanaugh, the centrality of violence for the construction of the state is exemplified by the history of the USA,

[19] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 48.
[20] Ibid., 50.
[21] Ibid., 51.
[22] Ibid., 5.
[23] Ibid., 94.
[24] Ibid., 47.
[25] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 10. Cavanaugh considers Niccolò Machiavelli central to this invention. See ibid., 10-11.
[26] Ibid., 12-16, drawing on Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States*.
[27] As far as I can ascertain, the argument was first formulated in Cavanaugh, "'A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House'", 397-420. It is advanced in Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*.
[28] Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 123.

a history that moves from war to war to war to a "war without end" after 9/11.[29] He concludes that it is not the state that needs to pacify the church but the church that needs to pacify the state.

Since the European Enlightenment, however, the church has been constructed—even by theologians—either as an institution inside the state apparatus (the public church à la Thomas Hobbes) or as an institution outside the state apparatus (the private church à la John Locke) so that it is incapable of countering the state.[30] Cavanaugh concludes that the Enlightenment confined politics to a "simple space" where struggles are fought between state subjects and state sovereign.[31] The rise of nationalism in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century required the "fusion of state and society" so that loyalty to the sovereign could be considered the prime priority for every subject in every state.[32] Cavanaugh criticises the terminology and theory of rights because it is interwoven with the state as prime priority: the state allocates rights and the subject accepts responsibilities.[33] He contends that "sacrifice"—lives being taken for the state, the own or the other's—is the consequence.[34] Violence, then, is at the core of the construction of the state for Cavanaugh. He is not contented with criticising certain policies and certain politics (such as the production of poverty in the UK), but takes aim at the constitution and the core of the state.

Throughout *Migrations of the Holy*, Cavanaugh offers analyses and assessments of how theology has responded to the simplification of public and political space. These responses could be systematised as the "mysticist model" where the state rules the church, the "ecclesiasticist model" where the church rules the state, and the "sectarianist model" where the church resists the state.[35] Cavanaugh is most interested in the ecclesiasticist model, exemplified by the political ecclesiology of Oliver O'Donovan, and the sectarianist model, exemplified by the political ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas, because in these models the church comes into view as a powerful political player.[36] Yet in contrast to the philosophical and sociological

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[29] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 27-28, refers to the American Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the "War on Terror" unleashed after 9/11. Cavanaugh's account of these wars comes close to the chapters collected in Hauerwas, *War and the American Difference*.

[30] Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 21-23.

[31] Ibid., 23.

[32] Ibid., 33, see also ibid., 33-35.

[33] Ibid., 36.

[34] Ibid.

[35] The terminology of "mysticism", "ecclesiasticism", and "sectarianism" follows the tripartite typology theorised by Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*. For a detailed discussion, see Schmiedel, *Elasticized Ecclesiology*, 113-124 and 129-145.

[36] See especially O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations* and Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*. In contrast to what I have called the ecclesiasticist and the sectarianist model, the mysticist model covers "public theology" (a

construction of the simple space that followed from the European Enlightenment, Cavanaugh commends the public and political space of the Middle Ages as a space that consisted of "overlapping loyalties".[37] He again turns to Augustine in order to criticise the concept of simple space in which all three models are rooted. "For Augustine, … two distinct societies … represent two distinct moments of salvation history. There is not one society in which there is a division of labor".[38] On the contrary, both cities compete within the same complex space:

> There is no division between earthly goods and heavenly goods, secular and sacred; there is no sphere of activities that is the peculiar responsibility of the earthly city. The city of God, therefore, … is a public in its own right. Indeed, the city of God is the only true "public thing", according to Augustine, as pagan Roman rule had failed to be *res publica* by refusing to enact justice…[39]

Augustine is interpreted in a way that complicates the simple space stretched out between sovereign, on the one hand, and subject, on the other hand. According to Cavanaugh, Augustine conceives of the two cities as "practices" or "performances" that are in conflict or in competition with each other.[40]

> Envisioning the two cities as performances helps us to avoid some serious problems with the way the church is imagined. The church as God sees it—the body of Christ—is not a human institution with well-defined boundaries, clearly distinguishable from the secular body politic. The church is … a set of practices or performances that participate in the history of salvation that God is unfolding on earth. The earthly city likewise is not simply identified with the state as institution… In Augustine's metaphor, both cities are groups of people united by the things they love.[41]

Compared to the three models of mysticism (where the state rules the church), ecclesiasticism (where the church rules the state), and sectarianism (where the church resists the state), Cavanaugh's concept of complex public and political space seems compelling. There is no need for church to accept the state's definition of the terms of public and political engagement.

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concept that Cavanaugh abhors so much that he uses it only in inverted commas) as represented by Martin Marty and John Courtney Murray. See Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 46-68.

[37] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 19. The guilds is one of the examples for overlapping loyalties that Cavanaugh comes back to again and again.

[38] Ibid., 56.

[39] Ibid., 58.

[40] Ibid., 63.

[41] Ibid., 66. See also ibid., 60, where Cavanaugh argues that "Augustine does not map the two cities out in space, but rather projects them across time. The reason that Augustine is compelled to speak of two cities is … simply because God saves in time".

If "politics is a practice of the imagination", as Cavanaugh pithily puts it, political players can be invented or re-invented.[42] While he shares the sectarianist and the ecclesiasticist call for the church as a powerful political player that can resist the colonialization of politics by state sovereignty,[43] his imaginative vision of the significance of the church for complex space seems much more careful and much more convincing.

> The urgent task of the church, then, is to demystify the nation-state… The church must break its imagination out of captivity to the nation-state; it must constitute itself as an alternative social space, and not simply rely on the nation-state to be its social presence; and the church must, at every opportunity, "complexify" space.[44]

As a consequence, Cavanaugh concludes *Migrations of the Holy* with a call for "a politics of vulnerability."[45] Although "vulnerability" is neither defined nor described, it is clear that the concept is connected to openness and otherness for him. Worship, Cavanaugh contends, makes the self vulnerable to the other and the other vulnerable to the self because it revolves around the otherness of God communicated by Jesus Christ—and God can be neither contained nor controlled.[46] "Worship is a posture of unseeing trust, the ultimate vulnerability of acknowledging the difference between creator and creature" which can proclaimed through the performative practice of the Eucharist.[47] Cavanaugh, then, characterises church as a set of performative practices of vulnerability that complexify public and political space in contrast to the simplicity of the state.

However, given that *Migrations of the Holy* assumes that the holy can migrate from church to non-church—which is to say, that the holy *cannot* be in the church and in the non-church *at the same time*—how vulnerable can these performative practices of worship be? The competition that runs through Cavanaugh's conceptualisation of church and non-church casts doubt on the openness and the otherness through which he characterises the politics of vulnerability.[48] Considering the centrality of competition for Cavanaugh's church raises a crucial question. Is Cavanaugh's church controlled by God or is God controlled by

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[42] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 1.
[43] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 66-68.
[44] Ibid., 42. Cavanaugh argues that the church act as alternative authority that accomplishes more than mediation between state sovereign and state subjects. For an example of the church's exercise of such authority, see ibid., 45: "To resist, the church must at the very least reclaim its authority to judge if and when Christians may kill, and not abdicate that authority to the nation-state. To do so would be to create an alternative authority."
[45] Ibid., 170-195.
[46] Ibid., 192-194.
[47] Ibid., 194.
[48] Ibid.

Cavanaugh's church? The category of creation, as analysed and advocated by Scandinavian Creation Theology, allows for critical and constructive responses to Cavanaugh's logic of competition.

The Politics of Creation

The three founding figures of Scandinavian Creation Theology—Knud E. Løgstrup (1905-1981), Regin Prenter (1907-1990), and Gustaf Wingren (1910-2000)—interpreted Martin Luther through the Danish theologian Nikolaj F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872).[49] Grundtvig was a theologian of church as well as a theologian of culture.[50] The theology of creation that he conceptualised throughout his career can be considered a constructive mediation or a creative metamorphosis of Luther. For Grundtvig, the category of creation allows for a combination—a "living interaction", as Niels Henrik Gregersen argues—of church and culture.[51] The church cannot be turned against the world and the world cannot be turned against the church because both are God's creation. Both Christians and non-Christians are created in the image of God.[52] In Grundtvig's prayer, God even "created the earth in your image after your likeness".[53] The crucial consequence is that Christians are not asked to choose between church and culture, the Christian and the non-Christian, but rather to encounter and experience the one through the other. There is church in the world and there is world in the church.

Grundtvig conceptualises the interaction of culture and church both anthropologically and christologically.[54] Against the Augustinian account of two competing cities that characterises so much of Luther and Lutheranism (and has had a huge impact on Cavanaugh), Grundtvig points to Jesus Christ as the one "in whom all things coinhere", "*den dybe Sammenhæng*"—literally, "the deep connection".[55] Grundtvig's theology is the root of the

[49] See again Gregersen, Uggla, and Wyller, "Reconfiguring Reformation Theology", 21-24.
[50] See the comprehensive summary by Gregersen, "Church and Culture in Living Interaction – Grundtvig the Theologian", in Broadbridge (ed.), *Human Comes First*, 22-54.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 29, pointing to Grundtvig, "Nordic Mythology (1832)", in Broadbridge, Warren, and Jonas (eds), *The School of Life*, 60-61, as a turning point towards theology of creation.
[53] Grundtvig, quoted in Macdonald Alchin, "N.F.S. Grundtvig: The Earth Made in God's Image", in Gregersen, Kristensson Uggla, and Wyller (eds), *Reformation Theology for a Post-Secular Age*, 127-144 at 133. See also the creative and constructive appraisal by Keller, "The Divine Lure *Draws* but does not Force", in Gerle and Schelde (eds), *American Perspectives*, 14-20.
[54] Gregersen, "Church and Culture in Living Interaction", 38-49.
[55] See Grundtvig's hymn, "Hail, our reconciling saviour", in Broadbridge (ed.), *Living Wellsprings*, 94: "As for me You once have striven, / May I love life in you given; / May my heart for You alone beat, / So my thoughts alone in you meet; / In whom all things coinhere". For a discussion of the Danish "*den dybe Sammenhæng*", see again Gregersen, "Church and Culture in Living Interaction", 42-43.

different positions and diverse proposals of the founding figures of Scandinavian Creation Theology. Following in their wake, I would like to stress the structural similarities in Luther's concepts of creation and in Luther's concept of church.[56]

Luther characterises creation through "faith (*Glaube*)": "I believe that God has created me together with all creatures … —and all that purely because of … mercy without any merit … in me".[57] For Luther, the category of creation is not about the past, but about the present: it is not a propositional statement concerning the structure of the world, but a personal stance concerning the significance of the world for the faithful. Creation is the constitutive and continuous gift from God, mediated by God's creatures.[58] "Observing creation, we see unconditional giving".[59] By definition, then, the creature depends on the creator. Hence, a strong and stable self-sufficient subject is not a creature and a creature is not a strong and stable self-sufficient subject.[60] For Luther, "we are all words of God".[61] The consequence of Luther's interpretation of creation is that the self is opened to the other and that the other is opened to the self. Since creatures are always already dependent on the creator, they are also dependent on the other creatures through whom the creator communicates.

Although Luther avoids the concept of church—for him it is "blind" with too many meanings[62]—the church is significant throughout his theology. Like creation, church is characterised through "faith (*Glaube*)".[63] Luther accounts for the church as the "assembly of people who are Christians".[64] Crucially, the assembly is itself "creatura verbi", a creature of the word of God: the church is where the word is and the word is where the church is.[65] The communication of the word, then, characterises church: the word creates the church and the church communicates the word. The consequence of Luther's concentration on the communication of the word is his critique of clerical control. Church could be characterised as a practice that occurs "wherever and whenever it pleases God" because the church cannot

[56] Gregersen, "Church and Culture in Living Interaction", 46-47, Gregersen argues that Grundtvig is after more than a mere analogy between the creator's love and the creature's love. I am also interested in more than analogies between church and creation in Luther which is why I refer to structural similarities.
[57] Luther, "Small Catechism" / "Kleiner Katechismus", BSLK 510-511 / BC 354.
[58] Schwanke, "Luther's Theology of Creation", in Kolb, Dingel, and Batka (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 201-211, at 203.
[59] Ibid., 204.
[60] Ibid., 206, where Schwanke argues that for Luther "the creature itself has no self-sustaining power".
[61] Luther, "Lecture on Genesis" / "Genesisvorlesung", LW 1,22-23 / WA 42,17.
[62] Luther, "On the Councils and the Church" / "Von den Konziliis und Kirchen", LW 41,144 / WA 50,625,16.
[63] See Daniel, "Luther on the Church", in Kolb, Dingel, and Batka (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 335-352.
[64] Luther, "On the Councils and the Church" / "Von den Konziliis und Kirchen", LW 41,143 / WA 50,624.
[65] Gemeinhardt, "Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit", in Albrecht (ed.), *Kirche*, 81-130, at 97.

control what it communicates.[66] Hence, a strong and stable self-sufficient community is not a church and a church is not a strong and stable self-sufficient community. The church is not the creator but the creature of the word.[67] The word is given by God's grace. It is given to be given away.

Luther, then, approaches both creation and church through faith: neither the creature possesses itself nor the church possesses itself. What creation and church possess cannot be possessed because it comes from outside creation and from outside church—from God. It cannot be confined, curtailed or controlled. In a way, both creation and church are consequences of the communication of the Gospel: both creation and church are the medium for the message "you are accepted".[68] The central categories of Luther's theology, then, come up in both his interpretation of creation and his interpretation of church: creation and church are *extra nos* rather than *intra nos*, given by God's grace. The creature is opened to the other, decentred rather than centred on itself (*incurvatus in se*).[69] Both Luther's theology of creation and Luther's theology of church, then, point to a network of interrelated relations that could be characterised as a web of vulnerability. Scandinavian Creation Theology has offered a variety of terms to tackle the interrelated relations at the core of the concept of creation, reaching from "mutualism" to "interconnectedness" to "mutuality".[70] I choose vulnerability because of the public and political implications of the concept indicated by recent research (including Cavanaugh's).[71]

For political theology, it is crucial that creation and church are at the core of what is commonly conceptualised as Luther's "Zweireichelehre", his doctrine of the two kingdoms.[72] Since creation is governed by God, the difference between what is church and what is not church is neither strict nor stable for Luther. Instead, God governs with two hands, a churchy and a not-so-churchy hand, so to speak.[73] Although Luther's account is not as structured and

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[66] Melanchthon, "Confessio Augustana" V, BSLK 49 / BC 31. See also Wyller, "A Theology of Surprise", in Gerle and Schelde (eds), *American Perspectives,* 76-84.
[67] Melanchthon, "Confessio Augustana" V and VII, BSLK 49; 50 / BC 31; 32. See also Luther, "On the Papacy in Rome" / "Von dem Papsttum zu Rom", LW 39,65 / WA 6,292,37-40.
[68] This account of the Gospel is, of course, taken from Tillich, "You are accepted", in Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, 153-163.
[69] For the interpretation of Luther's concept of sin as *incurvatus in se* in Scandinavian Creation Theology, see Rabjerg and Stern, "Freedom from the Self: Luther and Logstrup on Sin as 'Incurvatus in Se'", 268-280.
[70] See the contributions to Gerle and Schelde (eds), *American Perspectives*.
[71] See Sturla Stålsett, "Towards a Political Theology of Vulnerability: Anthropological and Theological Propositions", 464-478. See also Keller, *Political Theology of the Earth.*
[72] For a succinct summary of the (legacy of the) doctrine, see Anselm, "Zweireichelehre", in Müller, Balz, and Krause (eds), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. XXXVI, 776-784.
[73] See Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should be Obeyed" / "Von weltlicher Obrigkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei", LW 45,75-129 / WA 11,246-280.

systematic as the concept of "Zweireichelehre" suggests, it is clear that he sought to restrict the state from interfering with the church and the church from interfering with the state, thus situating the Lutheran Reformation between more reactionary political forces on the right and more radical political forces on the left.[74] Theologies of the "orders of creation (*Schöpfungsordnungen*)" followed from Luther's account, establishing institutions such as "authority (*Obrigkeit*)" as given in God's creation.[75] In the history of Lutheran theology, the doctrine of the two kingdoms has been identified as one of the causes of the church's complicity with the totalitarianism and terror of the German state under Adolf Hitler. Interestingly, the reception of the doctrine is not covered in Cavanaugh's account of the construction of the state,[76] although the standard story of the lives and afterlives of this doctrine would have confirmed it. Due to the doctrine of the two kingdoms, this standard story suggests, theologians evacuated theology from politics and politics from theology, which meant that they could not resist the totalitarian regime. By contrast, the christocentrism of Karl Barth's "Lehre von der Königsherrschaft Christi"—the doctrine of the "Kingship of Christ" so crucial to *The Barmen Declaration*—appears more pertinent and more promising for political theology.[77] Cavanaugh's argument is analogous to Barth's: although Cavanaugh is interested in the "Kingship of Church" rather than the "Kingship of Christ", the logic of competition between what is the world and what is not the world is vital for his political ecclesiology too. Historically, however, the case of the doctrine of the two kingdoms is much more complicated than the standard story conveys.

A number of Lutheran churches resisted the *Gleichschaltung* into the totalitarian regime by drawing on the doctrine of the two kingdoms.[78] Theologians that justified the totalitarianism of Hitler drew on Luther's ideas of two kingdoms, but actually argued for the identification of

[74] Anselm, "Zweireichelehre", 779. The concept "Zweireichelehre" was coined in the 1920s or the 1930s. See the still striking study by Nowak, "Zweireichelehre: Anmerkungen zum Entstehungsprozeß einer umstrittenen Begriffsprägung und kontroversen Lehre", 105-127.

[75] See Rosenau, "Schöpfungsordnung", in Müller, Balz, and Krause (eds), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. XXX, 356-358.

[76] Cavanaugh, "'A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House'", 399, refers to Luther's account of God's two ways of governing, suggesting that Luther's "intention was to prevent the identification of any politics with the will of God… In sanctifying that power to the use of secular government, however, Luther contributed to the myth of the State as peacemaker". In *Torture and Eucharist*, 133-137, Cavanaugh covers the politics of the Catholic Church in 1920s and 1930s Europe, including Germany. Interestingly, the "New Christendom Ecclesiology" he discusses and dissects ibd., 121-202, overlaps with the doctrine of the two kingdoms to a certain degree.

[77] See Barth, *Chirstengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde*, where the Christocentrism of the "Königsherrschaft Christi" is turned against the theology of the orders of creation in ethics and politics.

[78] Anselm, "Zweireichelehre", 777-778. However, it took German Lutheranism until the 1980s to accept and appreciate that democracy is in accordance with the doctrine of the two kingdoms. Ibid.

the nation-state with the church and the church with the nation-state.[79] Hence, it might have been the failure of applying the doctrine of the two kingdoms—the failure of differentiating politics from religion and religion from politics—that led to the support of totalitarian regime by Lutheranism.[80] By identifying politics with religion and religion with politics, Hitler could be supported as a sacred sovereign. Systematically, then, there are at least two ways of reading the complicity of theology with totalitarianism: either as a result of the de-theologization of politics (as in the standard story) or as a result of the theologization of politics (as in the critique of the standard story). In any case, the standard story of the doctrine of the two kingdoms has been so successful that much of German theology has banned "creation" from public and political theology because of its dubious and dangerous consequences in the theologies of the orders of creation. The German *Luther Handbuch* contains no entry on "Creation", although creation has been characterised as key to all of Luther's theology.[81]

Instead of delving into the details and the depth of the (reception of the) doctrine of the two kingdoms here, I would like to return to the Scandinavian context. For political theology, this context is interesting because it can circumvent the ever-same discussions and the repetitions of the ever-same discussions between Barthians and non-Barthians. In Scandinavia, it has remained possible to think theologically about politics without subordinating it to the reign of Christ or the reign of Church. According to Niels Henrik Gregersen, Bengt Kristensson Uggla, and Trygve Wyller, the founding figures of Scandinavian Creation Theology could think about politics without drawing a strong and stable distinction between what is church and what is not church.[82] Kristensson Uggla argues that the legacy of Grundtvig is crucial for a simultaneity of sacralization and secularization that brought the church closer to the world and the world closer to the church so that "there is no competition" between them.[83] Scandinavian Creation Theology, then, is a particularly promising point of departure to articulate a critique of the logic that is constitutive of Cavanaugh's political ecclesiology.

If the distinction between church and non-church is neither strong nor stable—because God is present both inside and outside the church, with Christ as "the deep connection"—then

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[79] See again, Nowak, "Zweireichelehre", 113-120, where he dissects the theological thinking of Emanuel Hirsch and Friedrich Gogarten. For the context of their thinking, see also Nowak, *Geschichte des Christentums in Deutschland*, 243-290.
[80] Anslem, "Zweireichelehre", 780.
[81] Beutel (ed.), *Luther Handbuch*. For the impact of the doctrine of creation on all of Luther's theology, see Schwanke, "Martin Luther's Theology of Creation", 399-413.
[82] Gregersen, Uggla, and Wyller, "Reconfiguring Reformation Theology", 17-19.
[83] Kristensson Uggla, "Lutheran Theology as Affirmation of the Secular", in Gerle and Schelde (eds), *American Perspectives*, 36-49, at 42. Kristensson Uggla's account of secularization is developed and discussed in *Katedralens hemlighet*.

the three models that I systematised above are solutions *without* a problem: the mysticist model (where the state rules the church), the sectarianist model (where the church resists the state), and the ecclesiasticist model (where the church rules the state) assume a strong and stable difference between church and non-church in order to relate the one to the other. Although Cavanaugh is not content with these solutions, he shares their analysis of the problem. He assumes that there is a competition between the performative practices of church and the performative practices of non-church that provokes a clash of identity constructions. Accordingly, it is the clash that dictates the interpretation of creation rather than creation that dictates the interpretation of the clash in Cavanaugh's account. Indeed, creation is hard to find in Cavanaugh's theology. When creation comes up in *Migrations of the Holy* —hits are few and far between—it is interpreted as "material" for the Eucharist of the church,[84] so that it needs to be "churchified" in order to overcome the strict and stable distinction between creator and creature that Cavanaugh suggests.[85] Crucially, in Cavanaugh's theology of the Eucharist, the world has no worth on its own. Worth comes only when "all human beings, Christians and non-Christians alike" are presently or potentially incorporated into the body of Christ. Of course, Cavanaugh insists that the world is governed by God. But because God's government is interpreted through the lens and the logic of competition, the insistence immediately leads him to call for a conversion of the world by the church:

> When Jesus suggests that God and Caesar each be rendered his due, he does not thereby envision a division of labor between two divine beings. There is no realm of life called "politics" that is only indirectly under God's providential care. Once on renders to God what is God's … there is nothing left that belongs properly to Caesar. … Strictly speaking, the world is a theocracy: it is ruled by God.[86]

In a way, both the theologian of creation and the theologian of church can concur with the characterisation of the world as a theocracy. But for the church theologian this means that the world cannot cope without church, while for the creation theologian this means that the world can cope without church. Sin is what is at stake here. For Cavanaugh, the Fall is vital. Since he interprets the world in terms of the Fall, Cavanaugh can introduce the distinction between a salvific response to the Fall (characterised by the church's liturgy) and a non-salvific response

[84] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 120, quoting Schmeemann, *For the Life of the World*, 15-16. See also Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 144-145.
[85] See Gregersen, Uggla, and Wyller, "Reconfiguring Reformation Theology", 17, for a critique of theologies that "churchify the world".
[86] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 4-5. See the discussion in Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 190-191.

to the Fall (characterised by the non-church's liturgy): "the Eucharist separates the church from the sinful 'world,' because in the Eucharist the church deconstructs the world and is caught up in the Kingdom of God".[87] Only the Eucharist captures "Christ's restoration of the *imago Dei* in humanity" through the church.[88] By contrast, Grundtvig's interpretation of the Fall insists on continuities between pre-lapsarian and post-lapsarian world so as to call into question any strong and stable distinction between church and non-church. Of course, the Lutheran Grundtvig is not spurning sin, but he is interested in humans as *simultaneously* sinful and salvific.[89] Introducing creation as characterised by Scandinavian Creation Theology into Cavanaugh's political theology of the church, then, has crucial consequences. Political ecclesiology is pushed beyond the logic of competition—both methodologically and thematically. Such a push might be a promising point of departure to tackle the production of poverty by governments, not only in the UK.

Methodologically, the introduction of creation into political theology is simple but significant. It requires the measurement of church and non-church with the same measure. Cavanaugh tends to account for the church theologically and for the non-church sociologically, so that his accounts result in a negative portrayal of non-church and in a positive portrayal of church. Page after page, Cavanaugh picks the state to pieces. He convincingly criticises theories of the state that "float free from any empirical testing of their theses".[90] But his account of the Eucharist is at least as free-floating itself. Empirically, churches often celebrate the Eucharist in a way which communicates the opposite of openness to the other. Can the Eucharist be characterised as a practice that "effaces" the "distinction between mine and thine" as long as churches put conditions on who is and who is not invited to celebrate?[91] Cavanaugh is aware of these conditions, but assumes that it is due to the infestation of the practices of church by the practices of non-church.[92] However, such infestations are an assumption rather than an argument, unless Cavanaugh shows where and when they occurred. The ways in which

[87] Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 250.
[88] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 47.
[89] See Grundtvig, "Inborn and Reborn Human Life," in Broadbridge (ed.), *Human Comes First*, 324-331, at 327-328: "If Adam's human life in the image of God had been entirely destroyed by the Fall, then God not even speak to the fallen Adam".
[90] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 8: "What I find unhelpful about such accounts is the way they float free from any empirical testing of their theses. Christian ethicists will commonly recognise that, in a sinful world, particular states always fall short of the ideal. Nevertheless, the ideal is presented not merely as a standard for Christian political practice but as a statement of fact: the state in its essential form simply is that agency of society whose purpose it is to protect and promote the common good, even if particular states do not always live up to that responsibility".
[91] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination, 47.*
[92] Ibid., 52.

church-goers and non-church-goers imagine public and political space can be analysed from quantitative and qualitative social-scientific angles.[93] Why not ask them? Admittedly, theologians like Cavanaugh who work in the wake of Milbank's critique of the social sciences are suspicious of the social sciences, because of what they perceive as their secularist archaeology or their secularist architecture. For Cavanaugh's theology, a "definition of 'social body' has its limits in that … the church is not simply one of a generic group of such bodies whose dynamics can be studied by an independent 'science' such as sociology".[94] But even if I was convinced by their critique,[95] I would argue that both church and non-church need to be measured by the same measurement, because they are both located in the same creation.

Thematically**,** the introduction of creation into political theology casts serious and significant doubt on the logic of competition that runs through Cavanaugh's contrast between church and non-church. Edmund Arens argues that for much of today's political theology the positive account of church rests on the negative account of the state.[96] Christopher Insole and Anna Rowlands push the argument further. The Augustinian Cavanaugh, Rowlands contends, comes close to Manicheanism because his "case for post-liberal ecclesial ethics is made on the basis of a fundamental binary", a binary that distorts the empirical messiness that characterises both what he sees as church and what he sees as non-church.[97] As Insole argues, Cavanaugh ascribes the account of church and non-church as performative practices to Augustine—"thus crediting Augustine for anticipating the work of Alisdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas"[98]—yet for Augustine the church and the non-church "are as it were collected in the net of the Gospel: and in this world, as in a sea, both swim together without separation, enclosed in the net until brought ashore".[99] Cavanaugh's dualism, then, is challenged because "we do not know who the outsider or the insider really is".[100] Although I am not convinced by accusations of heresy (because I am not convinced by heresy), I am interested in the practical and political impact that creation has on such a challenge to Cavanaugh's dualism.

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[93] See my critique of such idealizations of church in Schmiedel, "Praxis or Talk about Praxis? The Concept of Praxis in Ecclesiology," 120-136.
[94] Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 180.
[95] See my *Elasticized Ecclesiology*, 99-103, for a critique of the assumption that sociology is secularist.
[96] Arens, "Öffentliche oder gegenöffentliche Kirche? Ekklesiologische Konzepte Politischer Theologie", in Klingen, Zeilinger, and Hölzl (eds), *Extra ecclesiam…*,150-168.
[97] For the charge of Manicheism, see Rowlands, "Against the Manichees: Immigration Detention and the Shaping of the Theo-political Imagination", in Schmiedel and Smith (eds), *Religion in the European Refugee Crisis*, 163-186, at 177.
[98] Insole, "Discerning the Theopolitical: A Response to Cavanaugh's Reimagining of Political Space", 323-335.
[99] Ibid., 330, Insole quotes Augustine, *The City of God*, XVIII.49.
[100] Insole, "Discerning the Theopolitical", 333.

As mentioned above, Cavanaugh concludes *Migrations of the Holy* with a call for a politics of vulnerability. But if worship opens the worshippers up to the other—as Cavanaugh argues—then worship cannot be confined to the church. On the contrary, if the other is at the centre of church, the church would have to be concerned with its alterity rather than with its identity. Put perhaps too paradoxically, church is church where it is *not* about what is church but about what is *not* church. Such a de-centring of church is dangerous for Cavanaugh's political ecclesiology because it interrupts the constitutive logic of competition.[101] It casts doubt on Cavanaugh's recommendation to excommunicate those sinners whose sins "impugn the identity of the body of Christ".[102] For Cavanaugh, the practices of church are defined as vulnerable while the practices of non-church are defined as invulnerable, although a politics of vulnerability could or should allow him to overcome the differential definition and the differential distribution of vulnerability. It is because of the lack of creation theology, then, that Cavanaugh's politics is identity politics. The other can *only* come into view *if* she is presently or potentially Christian. Because identity is always already positive and alterity is always already negative—the one the "mirror image" of the other[103]—Cavanaugh's political ecclesiology cannot allow for coalitions between what it considers to be church and what it considers not to be church. For Cavanaugh, to tackle the production of poverty, the church has to counter the state (and the state has to counter the church). All states are rejected adamantly.[104] Coalitions are ruled out.

The Politics of Coalition

In political theories of the 1960s and the 1970s, identity politics was used to understand struggles for liberation worldwide. Where oppressed groups struggled against oppressing groups, identity was at stake. In identity politics, identity is the engine for political and practical mobilisation. Cavanaugh's political theology of church resonates with the core concerns and the core concepts of identity politics. The church is marshalled against the non-church in order to counter the infestation of politics by the nation-state that is constituted by violence.

[101] For the de-centring of the church, see again Wyller, "A Theology of Surprise", 76-84.
[102] Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 247.
[103] Ibid., 206.
[104] In most publications on political theology, Cavanaugh applies and advances the arguments developed in *Torture and Eucharist*, where he concentrated on Chile under Pinochet. But is there no difference between a dictatorship and a democracy?

While it is crucial to confirm that identity politics continues to counter oppression across the world, those who cannot fit the categories of identity that the politics required have come up with the notion of coalition(al) politics.[105] Queer activists and analysts have been vital here. Drawing on Judith Butler, their core concern is to convey that identities are performative: they can be done and they can be undone.[106] The contingency of the category exposes the risk that identity politics always already runs: defining the oppressed self in contrast to the oppressing other or the oppressing other in contrast to the oppressed self can cement the competition between oppressed and oppressor that it is supposed to criticise and counter. Cavanaugh's account of church as a "set of practices" or a "set of performances" seems to resonate with the critique of identity politics. But Butler, drawing on Jacques Derrida, points out that performativity cannot be contained: a performance always already includes both repetition and rupture.[107] Hence, accounting for church through a theory of performativity means accepting that no strong and stable distinction between church and non-church can be drawn.[108] The logic of competition that runs through Cavanaugh's theology casts doubt on his acceptance of the blurred boundaries of performativity. Whether convincing or not so convincing, the charge of Manicheism suggests that his politics runs the risk of cementing rather than criticising the hierarchy between the church and the non-church. The positive church needs the negative state (as much as the negative state needs the positive church) for its political presence. For Cavanaugh, church must not spill over into non-church and non-church must not spill over into church.

In contrast to identity politics, coalitional politics takes "coalition" as its core category. While the struggle against any and all oppressions remains, the engine of the struggle is now a fluid and flexible mix of people. Pointing to the experience of protest in streets and squares, Butler proposes,

> when we arrive, we do not know who else is arriving, which means that we accept a kind of unchosen dimension to our solidarity with others. Perhaps we could say that the body is always exposed to people … it does not have a say about…, and that these conditions of social embodiment are those we have not fully brokered. I want to suggest that solidarity emerges from this.[109]

[105] See Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century", in Smith (ed.), *Home Girls*, 356-368.
[106] Butler, *Gender Trouble* and Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.
[107] Butler, *Excitable Speech*.
[108] See my *Elasticized Ecclesiology*, 229-260.
[109] Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory*, 152.

Theologically, creation is a core category to capture such solidarity. Since it insists that the other is the image of God, regardless of whether she is or is not going to church, the category of creation allows theologians to assess the encounter with the other as an encounter with God and the encounter with God as an encounter with the other. God is not confined and controlled by the Eucharist. Luther's notion of others as "masks of God (*larvae Dei*)", adopted and adapted by Scandinavian Creation Theology, is an instructive interpretative tool here.[110] As Trygve Wyller argues, ecclesiology has to do with "a theology of surprise": if church "happens wherever and whenever it pleases God", the ecclesiologist can find church inside and outside church.[111] Wyller points to "embodied everyday life", such as moments where a meal is shared.[112] The church is experienced as an event, creation spills into church and church spills into creation. Such a theology of surprise has crucial consequences for the conceptualisation of a political ecclesiology. It prevents the construction of a contrast between church and world or world and church. Instead, creatures are creatures because they are enmeshed in the network of interrelated relations that relates the creature's relation to the finite other and the creature's relation to the infinite other to each other—creation as a web of vulnerability.

Butler's concept of vulnerability resonates with the core concerns of the theological category of creation. According to Butler, vulnerability can be conceptualised as a loss of control: "Let's face it. We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something".[113] Acknowledging vulnerability means apprehending that the loss of the other impacts the self as much as the loss of the self impacts the other. Vulnerability "posits the 'I' in the mode of unknowingness".[114] Butler, then, defines the human not by what it is, but by what it is not: what makes a self a self is that she is open to the other.[115] The self is *extra nos* rather than *intra nos*, de-centred rather than centred (*incurvatus in se*). Of course, Luther could close the openness to otherness at the core of the self by filling or fixing it firmly with Jesus

[110] See Gregersen, Uggla, and Wyller, "Reconfiguring Reformation Theology", 15.
[111] Wyller, "A Theology of Surprise", 82.
[112] Ibid. See also Wyller, "The Heterotopic Creation", in Wiberg (ed.), *The Alternative Luther*.
[113] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 23. See also ibid., 20-30.
[114] Ibid., 30.
[115] See ibid., 42-43: "By insisting on a 'common' corporeal vulnerability, I may seem to be positing a new basis for humanism. That might be true, but I am prone to consider this differently. A vulnerability must be … recognised in order to come into play in an ethical encounter… [I]f vulnerability is one precondition for humanization, and humanization takes place differently through variable norms of recognition, then it follows that vulnerability is fundamentally dependent on existing norms of recognition if it is to be attributed to any human subject".

Christ. But as Kristensson Uggla insists, in Scandinavian Creation Theology, Luther's interpretation of creation can be transposed or translated into a "humanism of the other".[116]

What I call "coalitional church", then, introduces the vulnerability so central to creation into political theology. The coalitional church is not concerned with saving its identity but with saving its alterity—the other. It is open to coalitions with Christian and with non-Christian others *for the sake of the other*, because the other is at the core of the identity of church, subject of church rather than object of charity. It sounds comfortable, but it is challenging. Butler cautions about coalitions:

> The Black feminist Bernice Johnson Reagon in the US, back in the early 1980s, put the point this way: "I feel as if I'm gonna keel over any minute and die. That is often what it feels like if you're really doing coalition work. Most of the time you feel threatened to the core and if you don't, you're not really doing no coalescing… You don't go into coalition because you just like it. The only reason you would consider trying to team up with somebody who could possibly kill you, is because that's the only way you can figure you can stay alive… That's why we have to have coalitions. Cause I ain't gonna let you live unless you let me live. Now there's danger in that, but there's also the possibility that we can both live—if you can stand it."[117]

Here, the politics of vulnerability is radical rather than reserved. Cavanaugh also argues that the "church does not exist for its own sake; it is not predicated on its own perpetuation, as is the state. Its discipline is a constant dying to itself for the sake of others".[118] However, in his ecclesiology the existence of the church for the sake of others is predicated on these others being either presently or potentially members of the body of Christ. The others, then, can neither be accepted nor appreciated on their own terms. Whether they are Christian or non-Christian, they can only appear as Christians. Yet if creation is introduced into political theology, it can inspire a coalitional church that blurs the boundaries between what is church and what is not church, between what is Christian and what is non-Christian. The coalitional church exists wherever church communities are concerned with the other, where they run shelters, schools or soup kitchens for the sake of the other. In the UK, churches are crucial for such welfare work across the country.

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[116] Kristensson Uggla, "What Makes Us Human?", 308-315, at 311. See also Kristensson Uggla, *Becoming Human Again*, 60.
[117] Butler, "Bodily Vulnerability, Coalitions, and Street Politics", 99-119, at 116, citing Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics", 356.
[118] Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 271.

The UN Rapporteur recounts: "One pastor told me that because the government has cut services to the bone, his church is providing meals paid for by church members".[119] The church, then, counters the poverty production in the UK. Does its welfare work mean it counters the state? Does its welfare work mean it confirms the state? As mentioned above, the establishment of the Church of England in the UK cancels any strict separation of the church from the state. Moreover, the UN Rapporteur points out how the government of Scotland works against the austerity policies implemented by the government of the UK.[120] The question, then, is *which* church relates to *which* state and *which* state relates to *which* church, not *whether* the one should or should not fight the other. In any case, the churches' welfare work inside and outside the UK cannot simply replace the social security system of a fully functioning state,[121] so that political ecclesiology should not pit the performative practices of church against the performative practices of non-church. Instead, it seems politically more pertinent and publicly more promising for the church to hold the state accountable to its citizens. If Christians and non-Christians work together in coalitions even when such coalitions could seem to threaten the identity of Christianity, they might convince the government to work for conditions under which vulnerable lives can be lived by all. So where and when shall we start?

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[119] Alston, "Statement on Visit to the United Kingdom", 15.
[120] Ibid., 7 and 20-21.
[121] Ibid., 15.

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